UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

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INTERIOR DEPARTMENT REQUESTS EXTENSION OF FISHING VESSEL LOAN PROGRAM

The Department of the Interior said today it has asked Congress for legislation aimed at assuring Loans for upgrading and modernizing the commercial fishing fleet of the United States, thereby contributing to a more efficient and profitable operation.

The Department requested an amendment to the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 which would extend until 1975 the authority to make such loans. The fishery loan section of the Act is scheduled to end June 30, 1965.

Proposed legislation would continue to limit loans from an existing \$13 million revolving fund to applicants unable to secure financial assistance from other sources at reasonable rates. The Department said the loan program has filled this credit gap and enabled fishermen to obtain financing needed to continue operation of their vessels.

The dual impact of foreign competition and increasing imports of fishery products has increased the need for reasonable long-term financing for fishing vessels and gear, the Department explained.

In submitting the legislative proposal, the Department said that as of July 31, 1964, a total of 142 fishing vessels had been replaced and 588 others had been converted, rebuilt, repaired, or re-equipped with certain fishing gear or with new engines under the act. In addition, 280 vessel mortgages and lienable debts of another 255 vessels were refinanced. Many of these were multi-purpose loans. The program is administered by the Department's Bureau of Commercial Fisheries.

The proposed legislation also provides that the annual interest rate on each loan shall be at a rate determined by the Secretary of the Treasury to be consistent with rates of interest on other public loans of comparable maturity.